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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 004073

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KS KN

SUBJECT: SEJONG INSTITUTE PRESIDENT BAEK JONG-CHUN EXPECTED  
TO BE NAMED AS NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

REF: SEOUL 3992

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: President Roh Moo-hyun this week is expected to name Baek Jong-chun, currently President of the government-supported Sejong Institute, as National Security Advisor to replace Song Min-soon, who is becoming Foreign Minister. Baek's appointment will mark the completion of Roh's national security roster as he enters his last year in office (reftel). With an academic background in security studies and inter-Korean issues, Baek is expected to be lower-profile than Song Min-soon. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) BIO: Baek Jong-Chun, 63 years old, has served as President of the Sejong Institute since November 2000, after serving as Vice President and Senior Fellow at Sejong since 1995. Baek is a military/security expert, having spent much of his career teaching at the Korea Military Academy. Baek graduated from the Korea Military Academy, has a B.A. and M.A. in Political Science from Seoul National University and a PhD in Political Science from the University of North Carolina, where his thesis was titled "Structure and Conflicts on the Korean Peninsula." Among Baek's seven Korean-language books are "Fifty Years of the U.S.-ROK Alliance: Analysis and Policy," (2003) and "South Korea's National Security Strategy: The Strategic Engagement and South Korea's Choice" (2004). He has also written numerous articles related to the division of the Korean Peninsula and has participated in U.S. seminars, including the May 2006 Brookings-Sejong "Seoul Washington Forum."

¶3. (SBU) Local observers cite Baek's ties to outgoing Minister of Unification Lee Jeong-seok, who is said to have helped Baek land the Vice Presidency and then Presidency at Sejong. By this interpretation, Baek's presence at the Blue House will help Lee maintain his influence after Lee returns to Sejong.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: We expect Baek to be lower-profile as National Security Advisor than outspoken Song Min-soon has been, for several reasons. First, Song has unrivaled access to and influence over President Roh, and will likely preserve this chief counselor role as Foreign Minister. In addition, Baek's principal deputy is expected to be Deputy Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, whom Song has worked with for years at MOFAT. Most of our MOFAT contacts believe that Baek's role will be similar to that of Kwon Chin-ho, National Security

Advisor 2003-2005, who was largely overshadowed by his deputy at the time, Lee Jeong-seok. In Baek's case, he will play second fiddle to Song Min-soon, while his deputy, Yun Byung-se, will do most of the day-to-day management of the NSC. One possible exception might be security and alliance management issues, an area of expertise for Baek.

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